

**CLAIMS**

We claim:

(1) An input device comprising:

5 a designated value change unit which changes a designated value when inputted by an operator by a predetermined first variation amount when it receives a first designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed; and

10 a variation amount change unit which changes the variation amount in said designated value change unit to a second variation amount that is smaller than the first variation amount when it receives a directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from the direction specified by the first designated value change directive within a predetermined variation amount change period after receiving the first designated value change directive, and that maintains the variation amount in said designated value change unit as the first variation amount  
15 when it receives a directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from the direction specified by the first designated value change directive after the variation amount change period has lapsed.

(2) The input device according to Claim 1, wherein said designated value change unit comprises:

20 an increase unit which increases the designated value by the first variation amount when it receives an increase directive which requests the designated value to be increased;

a decrease unit which decreases the designated value by the first variation amount when it receives a decrease directive requesting the designated value to be decreased; and

5        said variation amount change unit changes the variation amount of the designated value for both said increase unit and said decrease unit to the second variation amount if one of said increase unit and said decrease unit receives a directive within a predetermined period after the other of said increase unit and said decrease unit receives the directive.

(3)    The input device according to Claim 2, further comprising:

10        an increase button which allows the operator to input the increase directive; and

a decrease button which allows the operator to input the decrease directive.

(4)    The input device according to Claim 1, further comprising:

15        a display unit which visually displays information about changes in the designated value or changes in the variation amount.

(5)    The input device according to Claim 1, wherein when the variation amount of the designated value based on the designated value change directive is changed to the second variation amount, said variation amount change unit restores the variation amount of the designated value to the first variation amount  
20        if it is determined that a variation amount retention period has lapsed after the previous designated value change directive is received by said designated value

change unit.

(6) The input device according to Claim 1, further comprising:

an aggregate change management unit which manages an aggregate  
change in the designated value when said variation amount change unit changes  
5 the variation amount of the designated value for said designated value change unit  
to the second variation amount, wherein said variation amount change unit  
restores the variation amount of the designated value to the first variation amount  
when the aggregate change exceeds the first variation amount.

(7) The input device according to Claim 1, wherein:

10 if the variation amount is changed to the second variation amount, said  
designated value change unit changes the designated value using the second  
variation amount; and

if the designated value change directive is received again within the  
variation amount change period after changing the designated value in a direction  
15 different from that of the previous designated value change directive, said variation  
amount change unit changes the variation amount for said designated value  
change unit to a third variation amount smaller than the second variation amount.

(8) An input device comprising:

a designated value change unit which changes a designated value when  
20 inputted by an operator by a predetermined first variation amount when it receives  
a first designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be

changed; and

5 a variation amount change unit, coupled to said designated value change unit, which after receiving a second designated value change directive which changes the designated value in a direction different from that of the first designated value change directive, a third designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the second designated value change directive, and a fourth designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the third designated value change directive in sequence at intervals shorter than a  
10 predetermined variation amount change period, changes the variation amount for the fourth and later designated value change directives to a second variation amount smaller than the first variation amount.

(9) An input device comprising:

15 a designated value change unit which changes a designated value when inputted by an operator by a predetermined first variation amount each time it receives a designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed; and

20 a variation amount change unit, coupled to said designated value change unit, that changes the variation amount for said designated value change unit to a second variation amount smaller than the first variation amount if it receives the designated value change directive at a frequency lower than a predetermined frequency.

(10) An input device comprising:

a designated value change unit for changing a designated value when inputted by an operator by a predetermined first variation amount when it receives a designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed; and

5           a variation amount change unit, coupled to said designated value change unit, which changes the variation amount for said designated value change unit to a second variation amount smaller than the first variation amount if it receives both a directive for changing the variation amount for said designated value change unit and the designated value change directive.

10       (11) An input method comprising the steps of:

inputting a designated value specified by an operator;

changing the designated value by a predetermined first variation amount upon receiving a first designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed;

15           determining whether a directive for changing said designated value in a direction different from that of the first designated value change directive is received; and

20           changing the variation amount for said designated value change unit to a second variation amount that is smaller than the first variation amount if it is determined that a directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the first designated value change directive is received within a

predetermined variation amount change period after receiving the first designated value change directive, and keeping the variation amount for the designated value change directive set at the first variation amount if it is determined that a directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the first designated value change directive has been received after a predetermined period after receiving the designated value change directive.

(12) An input method comprising the steps of:

inputting a designated value specified by an operator;

changing the designated value by a predetermined first variation amount upon receiving a first designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed; and

changing a variation amount for a fourth and later designated value change directives to a second variation amount smaller than the first variation amount after receiving a second designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the first designated value change directive, a third designated value change directive which changes the designated value in a direction different from that of the second designated value change directive, and the fourth designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the third designated value change directive in sequence at intervals shorter than a predetermined variation amount change period.

(13) A program product comprising:

a computer usable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein for use with a computer, the computer readable program code in said program product implementing functions effective to:

input a designated value specified by an operator;

5           change the designated value by a predetermined first variation amount when receiving a first designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed;

          change the variation amount to a second variation amount that is smaller than said first variation amount when receiving a directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from the direction specified by the first designated value change directive within a predetermined variation amount change period after receiving the first designated value change directive; and

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          maintain the variation amount as the first variation amount when receiving a directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from the direction specified by the first designated value change directive after the variation amount change period has lapsed.

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(14) A program product comprising:

a computer usable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein for use with a computer, the computer readable program code in said program product implementing functions effective to:

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input a designated value specified by an operator;

change the designated value by a predetermined first variation amount when receiving a first designated value change directive requesting the designated value to be changed; and

5 when receiving a second designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the first designated value change directive, a third designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the second designated value change directive, and a fourth designated value change directive for changing the designated value in a direction different from that of the third designated value  
10 change directive in sequence at intervals shorter than a predetermined variation amount change period,

change the variation amount for the fourth and later designated value change directives to a second variation amount smaller than the first variation amount.